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UNCLAS PARAMARIBO 000098

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: CST GENTIAN COMPLETES OUTSTANDING TRAINING AND  
PUBLIC DIPLOMACY VISIT TO SURINAME

REF: GEORGETOWN 91

1. FOLLOWING ITS SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO GUYANA (REFTEL), CST GENTIAN SAILED INTO PARAMARIBO JANUARY 21 AND COMPLETED A HIGHLY PRAISED PROGRAM OF TRAINING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS. THE AMBASSADOR MET THE GENTIAN AT SEA ON A SURINAMESE PILOT VESSEL AND SAILED INTO PORT WITH THE GENTIAN'S CREW TO BEGIN THE VISIT. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO HOSTED A PORT-SIDE RECEPTION JANUARY 24 THAT WAS WELL ATTENDED BY MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL ARMED FORCES, PROMINENT BUSINESSMEN, AND LEADING POLITICIANS. THE GENTIAN GARNERED EXCELLENT AND EXTENSIVE MEDIA COVERAGE, INCLUDING AN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW WITH THE SURINAMESE CREW MEMBER THAT APPEARED IN A LOCAL WEEKLY.

2. DURING THE GENTIAN'S VISIT, 35 SURINAMESE SAILORS, SIX MEMBERS OF SURINAME'S PORT SECURITY DEPARTMENT AND FIVE MEMBERS OF SURINAME'S MARITIME AUTHORITY'S EMERGENCY REACTION TEAM RECEIVED 20 HOURS OF TRAINING IN FIVE CORE AREAS:

- MARITIME LAW ENFORCEMENT;
- FIRE FIGHTING AND AREA DAMAGE CONTROL;
- NAVIGATIONAL RADAR/GPS;
- BASIC LIFE SAVER MEDICAL ASSISTANCE;
- MAINTENANCE ASSISTANCE.

FOLLOWING THE TRAINING, THE CST GENTIAN DONATED USD 23,800 WORTH OF EQUIPMENT TO THE SURINAMESE NAVY.

3. IN AN LAST-MINUTE TWIST, THE GENTIAN AGREED TO TRANSPORT THREE SURINAMESE SAILORS TO TRINIDAD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CARIBBEAN ROUND-UP. THE DECISION WAS MADE TO BILLET THE THREE SAILORS ON THE GENTIAN WHEN IT BECAME APPARENT THAT THE GENTIAN'S ENGINEERING STAFF WAS UNABLE TO REPAIR ENGINE COMPUTER PROBLEMS ON A SURINAMESE PATROL BOAT THAT WAS TO TAKE PART IN THE ROUND-UP. SURINAMESE AUTHORITIES EXPRESSED DEEP APPRECIATION FOR THE OPPORTUNITY GIVEN THEIR SAILORS TO SAIL ABOARD THE GENTIAN TO TRINIDAD, ENABLING SURINAME TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CARIBBEAN ROUND-UP.

4. COMMENT. THE GENTIAN VISIT UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CST PROGRAM TO SURINAME. IN ADDITION TO THE OUTSTANDING TRAINING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS VALUES IT OFFERED, THE GENTIAN'S VISIT HELPED ADVANCE SEVERAL EMBASSY PRIORITIES. IN PARTICULAR, THE VISIT CAME AT A TIME WHEN SURINAME IS MOVING TOWARD ESTABLISHING A COAST GUARD THAT WOULD TAKE OVER MANY OF THE MISSIONS CURRENTLY ASSIGNED TO ITS SMALL NAVY, A MOVE THAT THE US AND THE NETHERLANDS HAVE ADVOCATED FOR SEVERAL YEARS. POST EXPRESSES ITS APPRECIATION FOR THE CST PROGRAM AND REGISTERS ITS STRONG SUPPORT FOR ITS CONTINUATION. BARNES

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